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SUBJECT: SOUTHEAST TURKEY PRESS SUMMARY FOR MARCH 15, 2005

This is the Southeastern Turkey press summary for March 15, 2005. Please note that Turkish press reports often contain errors or exaggerations; AmConsulate Adana does not vouch for the accuracy of the reports summarized here.

POLITICAL, SECURITY, HUMAN RIGHTS

YENI SAFAK / SABAH / MILLIYET / RADIKAL / ZAMAN / OZGUR GUNDEM / CUMHURIYET / EVRENSEL : Another earthquake measuring 5.9 shook Karliova district of Bingol yesterday morning and wounded eighteen people. Sixty-nine buildings were seriously damaged and 383 buildings were moderately damaged. The relief aid's arrival in remote settlements was delayed due to the snow-blocked roads. People stayed outside at very cold temperatures all night long.

CUMHURIYET / EVRENSEL: Nevruz celebrations will start early this year. A variety of activities and events will be held in Istanbul, Adana and Gaziantep to celebrate the day. DEHAP (Democratic People's Party) Istanbul Provincial Chairperson said that they will invite the Governor and the Mayor to this year's celebration and celebrate the event together with political parties and mass organizations. DEHAP's Provincial Chairperson in Gaziantep said that recent developments in the (southeastern) region will be emphasized during the celebrations, giving a message of cooperation to democratic forces.

RADIKAL / YENI SAFAK / EVRENSEL: The Ministry of Foreign Affairs rejected claims made in the recent Human Rights Watch (HRW) report. (Note: The document reportedly claims that Turkey had failed to implement plans to facilitate the return of internally displaced people, mainly Kurds, to southeastern Turkey, and had made misleading statements about the number of people who actually returned. End note.) The Ministry announced that the report, far from being a real representation of events, is ignoring the sincere endeavors of Turkey to facilitate the return of the people to the region.

OZGUR GUNDEM / CUMHURIYET / EVRENSEL: A report prepared by the Egitim-Sen (Education Union) showed that 800,000 children are not able to go to schools in the (southeastern) region, due to both an inadequate number of facilities and the economic needs of some families. Children are going to the agricultural fields to work. In order for these children to receive full-day schooling (at a classroom size of 30 students per class), 26,000 classrooms and 22,000 additional teachers are needed at the present. This is because currently, the sizes of the classrooms in the region are 60 to 70 students per class, and the schoolday is divided in half to receive two groups of students. The report adds that the 15 years of conflict in the region badly affected the psychology of many children.

BOLGE: Suleyman Onatca, Chairperson of the Adana Industrialists and Businessmen Association, criticized the way PM Erdogan governed the country. According to Onatca, PM Erdogan has been disregarding public opinion, the Turkish economy has been on a bad track and unemployment rates have been soaring. Onatca placed blame on the government for falling into idleness since December 17.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENTS

1. SABAH (GUNEY): The producers of the Cukurova Plain have been producing organically cultivated lettuce and exporting some of the produce to EU countries. The lettuce is either being consumed in supermarkets and fast food chains in Istanbul, Izmir and Ankara, or is being made into salads in Istanbul factories for export mainly to the U.S., England, Denmark and Italy to meet the demand of fast food markets there.

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